

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 EA-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5480
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PORG, UK
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SUBJECT: THE LABOR PARTY AND THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL

SUMMARY: THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY HAS PLAYED A STEADILY
DECREASING ROLE IN THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL (SI) IN
RECENT YEARS. THE PRODUCT OF INCREASED POLITICAL INTROS-
PECTION, PRE-OCCUPATION WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, INTERNAL
PARTY POLITICS AND THE PARTY'S FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES,

THIS TREND IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. NEARLY ALL OF THE FACTORS WHICH HAVE CAUSED THE LABOR PARTY TO MOVE FROM THE MAINSTREAM OF SI ACTIVITY ARE EXPECTED TO REMAIN OPERATIVE. INDEED, THE GAP BETWEEN THE LABOR PARTY AND THE SI IS LIKELY TO GROW AS THE LATTER CONTINUES TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVIST ROLE, PARTICULARLY IN THE THIRD WORLD. OUR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE LABOR PARTY ATTITUDES TOWARD AND PARTICIPATION IN THE SI IS MINIMAL, BUT IT MAY BE IN OUR INTEREST TO ENCOURAGE PARTY LEADERS TO INCREASE THEIR INVOLVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. IN RECENT YEARS THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY, WHICH ALMOST SINGLEHANDEDLY REVIVED THE SI FOLLOWING WWII, HAS PLAYED AN EVER-DIMINISHING PART IN THE AFFAIRS OF THAT ORGANIZATION. AT THE POLICY LEVEL OF SI, LABOR IS REPRESENTED BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER HAROLD WILSON, WHO APPEARS TO BE LITTLE MORE THAN A FIGUREHEAD AND WHOSE INFLUENCE IN THE LABOR PARTY ITSELF IS CLOSE TO NIL. AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL, LABOR'S INFLUENCE IS, IF ANYTHING, EVEN LESS. ITS ENTIRE DELEGATION TO THE SI BUREAU IS NOT HIGHLY REGARDED AND IS OCCASIONALLY ABSENT FROM MEETINGS OR ONLY PARTIALLY REPRESENTED. LABOR OFTEN FAILS TO PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS, ITS ABSENCE FROM THE SI'S RECENT MISSION TO LATIN AMERICA BEING ONLY THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE. AND PERHAPS

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MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, NO VOICES ARE HEARD WITHIN THE PARTY PROTESTING THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND SOCIALIST BROTHERHOOD MAY STILL BE ACCEPTABLE CATCH PHRASES ON THE PUBLIC PLATFORM. BUT THE RHETORIC IS EMPTY AND PRODUCES NO RESONANCE.

2. IN DISCUSSING THE CAUSES OF THIS SITUATION WITH PARTY LEADERS, OFFICIALS AND MPS, A VARIETY OF EXPLANATIONS AND EXCUSES ARE HEARD, BUT FEW EXPRESS MUCH REGRET OR DESIRE TO TURN THE TIDE. IN EXPLAINING THIS PHENOMENON OUR SOURCES GENERALLY CITE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING FACTORS: THE DESIRE OF OTHER EUROPEAN AFFILIATES TO INCREASE THEIR INFLUENCE IN THE SI; VARIOUS PARTY PERSONALITIES (E.G. WILSON, GENSEC RON HAYWARD. INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY JENNY LITTLE, INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN IAN MIKARDO) WHO FOR THEIR OWN REASONS HAVE NOT PLACED MUCH EMPHASIS ON THE SI; POLITICS WITHIN THE PARTY, PARTICULARLY THE STRESS BETWEEN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC RIGHT-WING AND THE "DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST" LEFT-WING, HAVE PRODUCED A STALEMATE IN TERMS OF INTERNATIONAL POLICY DIRECTION; AND THE PARTY'S CHRONIC FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES HAVE PRECLUDED INCREASING RESOURCES FOR THE

SI AND THE PARTY'S INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN GENERAL
(I.E., THE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT'S BUDGET HAS REMAINED
UNCHANGED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 1974, DESPITE INFLATION
AND A SHARP DEPRECIATION IN THE POUND). ALL OF THESE
POINTS SEEM VALID AND EXPLAIN PART OF THE PROBLEM, BUT
THEY DO NOT TELL THE WHOLE STORY.

3. IN OUR JUDGMENT THE MAJOR CAUSE, AT LEAST OVER THE
PAST FOUR AND A HALF YEARS, APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN LABOR'S

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TURN INWARD -- ITS PRE-OCCUPATION WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, LARGELY ECONOMIC, RATHER THAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS. THIS SHIFT IN OUTLOOK, OF COURSE, IS NOT UNNATURAL IN A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC RECESSION. INDEED, SIMILAR TENDENCIES CAN BE IDENTIFIED IN THE U.S. AND ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE. BUT IN THESE CASES THE DRIFT HAS BEEN LESS DRAMATIC AND EFFECTIVELY CHECKED, IF NOT ENTIRELY REVERSED. BUT IN THE LABOR PARTY INTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS -- PERSONALITIES, IDEOLOGY AND FINANCE -- HAVE REINFORCED THE DRIFT.

4. THE TRADITIONAL BRITISH COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC FORMS AND THE PRAGMATIC RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS CAN -- IT SEEMS TO US -- MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE FORMATION OF A RESPONSIBLE AND HUMANE APPROACH, ALBEIT A SOCIALIST ONE, TO CURRENT WORLD PROBLEMS, AND PARTICULARLY THOSE OF DEVELOPING SOCIETIES WHERE THE SI IS DEVOTING INCREASED EMPHASIS, THUS LABOR'S ISOLATION FROM THE SI MAINSTREAM CAN ONLY BE REGARDED AS UNFORTUNATE. THIS IS NOT TO ARGUE THAT THE BRITISH SOCIALISM IS TRANSFERABLE OR EVEN ADAPTABLE TO OTHER NATIONS AND CULTURES, BUT THAT ASPECTS OF THE BRITISH APPROACH CAN BE USEFUL AND ARE ADAPTABLE TO OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. GIVEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE LABOR PARTY CAN PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THE SI, ITS INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN BUREAU MEETINGS, SPECIAL MISSIONS AND SUBSTANTIVE CONFERENCES (E.G., HELSINKI CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT) WOULD SEEM DESIRABLE. ALTHOUGH WE CAN DO LITTLE TO ALLEVIATE LABOR'S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS OR CHANGE THE MAKEUP OF ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE (NOR WOULD IT BE PRUDENT FOR US TO TRY TO DO SO), WE CAN ENCOURAGE THOSE ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY WHO WISH LABOR TO ADOPT A MORE ACTIVE POSTURE IN THE SI. AD HOC ARRANGEMENTS SUCH AS

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FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN'S PLANNED PARTICIPATION IN THE FORTHCOMING HELSINKI CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE THE KIND OF ACTIONS WE MAY WISH TO ENCOURAGE, RECOGNIZING THAT OUR CONTRIBUTION WOULD BE ON OR VERY

NEAR THE MARGIN. BUT OVER THE LONGER TERM, ANY ENCOU-
RAGEMENT WE CAN OFFER COULD HELP TO OVERCOME PREVAILING
ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SI WHICH IN LARGE PART LIE AT THE
ROOT OF THE STRUCTURAL AND FINANCIAL PROBLEMS.

6. WE WOULD WELCOME DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS ON THE SI, AND
ITS POTENTIAL ROLE IN SERVING US OBJECTIVES.

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